

**A**  
**L E T T E R**  
**TO**  
**Dr. RICHARD HUCK.**

**Price One Shilling.**

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A  
L E T T E R  
T O  
Dr. RICHARD HUCK,  
O N T H E  
Construction and Method of using  
V A P O R B A T H S.

By THOMAS DENMAN, M. D.

*Pulsa fugit macies : abeunt pallorque situsque ;  
Adjectoque cavæ supplentur sanguine venæ ;  
Membraque luxuriant.*

*Ovid. Metamorphos.*

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M D C C L X X.



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A  
L E T T E R  
T O  
Dr. RICHARD HUCK.

S I R,



THE knowledge of the  
construction and method  
of using Vapor Baths be-  
ing confined to very few people,  
I am urged by a strong persuasion



of the good consequences which will follow the more general admission of them into practice, to publish the following short account of them. I address it to you, Sir, because you have been assiduous in finding opportunities to ascertain the effects of Vapor Bathing; because I am convinced of the liberality of your sentiments, and of the eagerness with which you cultivate the improvement of the science you profess.

Many

Many objections have been made to the introduction of Vapor Baths. These have probably arisen from different causes; but the opinion of difficulties attending the process, hath been most frequently alledged. When the contrary appears, I shall hope to see Gentlemen of the profession availing themselves of the advantages which they will certainly obtain by a prudent and steady use of this medicine, not only in diseases where fomentations do

service, but also in many others hitherto deemed incurable.

Vapor Baths may be divided into three kinds ; first, those which convey the dry Vapor ; secondly, those which convey the moist Vapor ; and thirdly, those which combine the dry and moist Vapors.

The judgement of the Physician will be exerted in the proper application of these, separated or united ;



united ; and whatever pretence may be made, it appears difficult to draw resources elsewhere.

The most simple contrivance, provided it answers the purpose of conveying the different kinds of Vapor effectually, is to be preferred.

All the apparatus, which is necessary for bathing with the moist or united Vapor, is described on the Plate, and will be sufficiently explained, that the use of the different

ferent parts may be understood, or to give all necessary information to the artificer who is employed to make them.

Fig. 1. is a section of a Bath made of copper, which conveys the moist and dry Vapor united.

A. a valve, which will occasionally prevent the ascent of both kinds of Vapor, partly or wholly.

B. a valve, to prevent the ascent of the Vapor of the spirit of wine, used for the lamp.

C. the

C. the head of the Bath.

D. a button to the orifice, through which the medicated liquor is to be poured into the Bath, or into which air may be thrown, to make the Vapor rise in larger quantities.

E. the body of the Bath.

F. the stand in which the lamp is fixed.

Fig. 2. G. the head of a Bath made of tin, for moist Vapor only.

H. the body, which varies little from a common kettle.

I. a

I. a cylindrical tube made of tin,  
to fix to either Bath.

K. a conical tube for the same  
purpose.

The tin tubes may be made of  
different dimensions; and it was  
recommended to make flexible  
ones of leather, or of leather in-  
closing a spiral piece of tin or  
wire to prevent them from col-  
lapsing.

But on trial, these were found  
not to answer; for by drawing  
on



on the leather or oil-cloth to confine the Vapor, the flexibility was in a great measure lost. Nor was a tin pipe made on the principle of a lobster's tail found more convenient. However, a tube contrived in imitation of the machine used by hair-dressers, in which the wires are circular, has been found by experience to answer every purpose we can desire.

As the method of constructing Baths is beyond expression easy,  
the



the following directions for using them will be found very convenient, and are in general all which it is necessary to observe.

If it is thought requisite to bath the whole body, a piece of oil-cloth is to be laid upon the inferior bed-clothes, and over that a blanket, on which the Patient must lie. A cradle after the fashion of that in common use to prevent the disturbance of a fractured limb by the bed-clothes, is necessary to allow the free access  
of

of the Vapor to every part of the body. The cradle ought to be covered with another piece of oil-cloth, and over that what bed-clothes we chuse, which must be tucked in close, especially about the neck, to prevent the escape of the Vapor. Thin flannel may be thrown loosely over the body, to avoid any inconvenience from the immediate heat.

A small opening must be left at the feet for the admission of the tube.

No

No other regulation of the heat is necessary than what will occur to the Operator, from the sensations of the Patient, and his own judgement.

One or more lamps may be lighted, according to the quantity of Vapor we desire to raise.

In partial Bathings, the same method must be used; and even in this case, it would be better for the Patient to be in bed, as  
an

an univerfal ſweat is commonly brought on.

It ſeems better not to continue the uſe of the Vapor too long, the firſt time it is applied. Though it has been applied to particular parts for three or four hours, the uſual time has been about fifteen minutes ; but the ſpontaneous ſweat which follows may be kept up at pleaſure.

The more obſtinate and deep rooted the Diſeaſe, the more gen-

B

tle



tle should be the application of the Vapor, when first used, unless in cases of imminent danger.

This seems a good general rule, for very obvious reasons.

The decoction from which the Vapor is to be raised, may be medicated with ingredients adapted to the complaints for which the Bath is used. Little more has been expected of late years, from fomentations of any kind, than warmth and moisture. Perhaps  
the



the ancient Physicians were too scrupulously exact in distinguishing the different qualities of herbs, and other natural bodies, and often deceived in their expectations, or at least in their opinion of the mode of operation, as they attributed to these relaxing and bracing properties by which they supposed that diseases were cured. But as there is an essential difference in almost every mode of trial, between Rosemary and Mal- lows for instance, it is reasonable to think that their effect will be dif-

ferent when they are applied with the intention of curing diseases. Indeed the contrary opinion has not a little contributed to reduce Botany, from whence men of genius, in all ages, have hoped to reap great advantages, to the almost useless footing on which it now stands.

The dry Vapor may be loaded with the active parts of such medicines as are judged to be proper, by dissolving or infusing them in the spirit of wine used for the lamp.

lamp. Or Gums, and the like substances, may be mixed up with other inflammable matter in the manner of a fuse, which seems a preferable method to the very awkward one, in which fumigations have been generally used.

The following Cases, which have fallen under my own observation, are intended to confirm the accounts given by Mr. Symonds, of the effects of Vapor-Bathing. For though Vapor-Baths, under different forms, have been

at all times recommended and used by Physicians, it is to this very sensible and ingenious Surgeon we are obliged, for the present introduction and easy method of applying them ; a knowledge which, I am informed, he has acquired with great expence and trouble. Since that time, indeed, fixed Baths of the same kind have been established at Chelsea and Knightsbridge.

They are mentioned rather as incitements to others to use this  
valuable



valuable medicine, than as guides in what complaints it will be proper ; though it may be right to observe, that no bad consequences have ever been known to follow the application of it.

A Gentleman had been under the care of a very eminent Physician in town, for a Fever preceded by strong rigors, and attended with a very acute pain, extending from the region of the spleen to the left groin. He had

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been



been bled very often, fomented, and taken a variety of medicines, but the pain continued very violent, especially upon the least motion, though the Fever was abated. The complaint was judged to be an adhesion of the Colon to the Peritonæum, and it was suspected that an abscess was formed at the part. He was bathed the first time, twenty minutes, with the united Vapor, and found himself easier. The Bathing was repeated every night and morning,

morning, eight times, when he was perfectly freed from the pain, which did not return.

Many of my friends have used the Vapor-Bath frequently in complaints of the Bowels, arising from different causes, in which it scarce ever failed to give present ease, and has often intirely cured them; nor is the effect surprizing, if we consider the speedy and powerful manner in which it operates.

A Gen-

A Gentleman's servant was suddenly seized with an acute pain in the left side of the Thorax. He had a high Fever, oppression in breathing, and a teasing cough. Bleeding and the medicines given not relieving him, I applied the Vapor-Bath, which eased him, but did not effect a cure ; which was indeed obtained with great difficulty by repeated bleeding, and a steady use of the most efficacious medicines.

Vapor-Bathing has been often  
used

used in complaints of the Thorax. Those which are external will frequently be removed by it; but in the true Pleurisy or Peripneumony, it seems unequal to the disease, though it generally gives some relief.

Glandular swellings of the jaws, throat, and breasts, are often very troublesome and obstinate against the most powerful remedies. Many instances have occurred, where the Vapor-Bath has  
suc-



succeeded, after every other method has failed.

A White Swelling is a term which has been applied with such latitude, that no precise idea is conveyed by it. Perhaps no two Surgeons mean the same disease when they use it. It is well known, however, in practice, that there is a disease of the joints, particularly of the knee, which from the constant acute pain is often thought to require amputation,



tion, though on dissecting the limb afterwards, we find no signs of disease, except a little thickening of the ligaments, perhaps none at all. Judging by analogy, I thought it probable that all or the greatest part of these would be cured by the Vapor-Bath, if used before the bones were affected; and I was happy to find my conjectures were not ill-founded, when you informed me that within your own knowledge, some extraordinary cures of this disease had been performed, under  
the

the direction of a Surgeon \* no less remarkable for his candor than ingenuity. This Gentleman used the steam of warm water only, till the pain was much lessened, and then, a proportion of the ingredients for the spirit of Salt Armoniac, by which the tumor was removed.

To give particular Cases of all the disorders in which Vapor-Bathing has done service, would

\* Mr. Wyatt, Surgeon to the Middlesex Hospital.

be an endless task. As a sudorific, nothing can more speedily answer our intention, or be more powerful; witness the cures of dropfies, partial and general, which have been obtained by its use. Many diseases of the skin would probably be relieved by it. Chronical Rheumatisms, and that most pertinacious symptom the Sciatica, contractions and impaired motions of the limbs after violent injuries, would generally yield to it. Many men are discharged from his Majesty's service, in time of war,

war, as unserviceable, for these complaints, which might probably be cured by it ; therefore interest, as well as humanity, should induce us to give it a fair trial.

But there is no disease in which Vapor-Bathing promises more desirable effects, than in the Venereal. Experience shews, that there are many constitutions which will not bear, without great inconvenience, the operation of Mercury ; and many symptoms, which will be sooner relieved by other means.

Perhaps,



Perhaps, besides the various symptoms which the same cause will produce in different constitutions, there may be in nature, different species of the same kind of virus. Mercury seems to fail more frequently in the delicate habits of body, than in the strong; and the former are more subject to eruptions on the skin, nocturnal pains and exostoses, and they are likewise more subject to returns of the disease after it has disappeared. It does not stay long enough in the constitution to produce its

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proper

proper effect; and such are in general so irritable, that they suffer exceedingly from the use of it. These always receive benefit from warm bathing, before they are put into the mercurial course, which without doubt can only be depended upon for an effectual cure. Vapor-Bathing is yet more speedy, and often more desirable, because we are able to apply it with less trouble. The following detail of its effects upon some symptoms may be useful.

An

An Officer lately returned from America had been many years ill of the venereal disease, for which he had scarce attempted to get a perfect cure. He had an Exostosis of long standing upon the ulna of the right arm, nocturnal pains, and eruptions over the whole head and face. He was Vapor-bathed for three successive nights, and took fifteen grains of Dover's Powder, at bed-time. The pains were abated; and the eruptions began to scale. I put him on a

course of mercurial ointment. The Exostosis not receding, this was partially bathed twice every day, and in a fortnight was entirely gone. The ointment was persisted in, till he had used six ounces, when he was free from any complaint.

I have tried it once with success in an Exostosis which remained after a course of mercury; but the Patient was immediately put upon the same regimen, as if

no



no steps had been taken to remove the infection.

Phymoses are often exceedingly troublesome, and attended with bad consequences by concealing Chancres. The cure obtained by flitting the Prepuce is often as troublesome as the disease.

A young man applied to me who had a Phymosis. I should have guessed from the appearance, that it would have required six or seven

seven days to relax it. I directed him to use the Bath, and finding the constriction beginning to give way, I continued it for three hours, when I was able to withdraw the Prepuce entirely and dress the Chancres, which were very numerous, on the Corona Glandis. A considerable tightness returned for three or four days, but it always yielded to a short application of the Bath.

Buboes are sometimes of so indolent

dolent a nature, that they will neither suppurate nor disperse. One of long standing was intirely removed by the Bath, though it required a longer continuance of its use than any case in which I have tried it.

Vapor-Bathing has been used for the Hernia Humoralis, as it is called, and apparently with superior advantage to fomentations.

Probably the number of in-  
 3 curable

curable symptoms in this disease would be much lessened by Vapor-Bathing, such as Tumors on the Testicles, Distortions of the Penis, Nodes and all other kinds of Tumors, the fixing of the Jaw, diseases of the Prostrate Gland, and Urethra, &c.

Experience proves the advantages of Vapor-Baths; nor is it difficult to conceive, that the steam of warm water should be much more subtile and penetrating than water itself. It seems to  
have



have the properties of a Fluid of an intermediate nature between water and air. But accounting for the mode of operation is no part of the present design, as it does not seem absolutely necessary to adapt the effects of Vapor-Bathing to any Hypothesis, provided the facts are ascertained. Though arguments might probably be hence drawn to prove, with great plausibility, that diseases proceed, according to the doctrine of different systematic Writers, either from too strict or too lax Fi-

D

bres,

[ 42 ]

bres, from Spasm, or from the defect or excess of Electric Fire.

I am,

With the most affectionate esteem,

Dear S I R,

Your obliged humble Servant,

THOMAS DENMAN.

London,

November 1, 1770.

*Lately Published,*

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AND ON

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